1-1-2003

La Doppia Presenza: The Two Worlds of Work and Family Facing the Women of Northeastern Italy

Lori Shuler
Lehigh University

LA DOPPIA PRESENZA: THE TWO WORLDS OF WORK AND FAMILY FACING THE WOMEN OF NORTHEASTERN ITALY

Lori Shuler

[G]ender is one of the prime forces in historical change...

— Perry R. Willson, 1993

Introduction

Since the end of World War II Italian women have made tremendous progress toward gender equality. The women's movement in the 1970s led to legislation that focused on social and economic equality for women, and this framework has continued to expand and evolve over the past three decades. In fact, "Italy is the most progressive country in the world when it comes to statutory rights to work-leave for birth and marriage." (Mignone, p. 313) Although the legislative system appears to amply support women's increasing desires to pursue a career while maintaining a family, many issues are left to be resolved before a true balance can exist.

One major obstacle to this balance is the nature of the Italian culture, in which men and women occupy traditional roles of breadwinners and housewives, respectively. This creates a difficult situation for women who enter the workforce because they are pursuing careers while continuing to shoulder the majority of domestic responsibilities. As a result, Italy is experiencing a crisis similar to one occurring in many other industrialized countries: women are increasingly overwhelmed with conflicting demands, which not only is a danger to their physical and psychologic health, but also has enduring effects on the rest of the society, "especially in the North where the tempo is so fast and standards so exacting." (Mignone, p. 317)

Certainly there are ways to alleviate the

domestic burden of working women without compromising the family-oriented Italian culture. In this article I examine the situation in northeastern Italy as a model for discussing potential remedies to this crisis. I begin with a review of recent historical events, including the women's movement, and then discuss the changing demographics of the workforce. The urgency of the situation becomes apparent as I analyze the effects of modernization and the women's movement, including the low birthrate and changing family structure. Lastly, because Italy already has well-established gender-issues legislation, I focus on other strategies for restructuring the division of labor between the sexes in the home, workplace and community.

Historical Perspective

Italian women have advanced considerably since the Fascist period (1922–1943) when they were known as "angels of the hearth" (Willson) to their present-day status as fellow breadwinners in the workforce. During Mussolini's rule, quotas were placed on the number of women allowed in the workforce, and their primary role as "breeding machines" was highly publicized and rewarded. (Willson) In fact, "motherhood was extolled as the only real contribution women could make to society." (Willson, p. 2) The powerful Catholic Church also encouraged women to fulfill their obligations as wives and mothers, as illustrated in 1946 by Pope Pius XII:

> Every woman is destined to be a mother...For true women, all life's problems are understood in terms of the family...Equality with men, outside the home where she is queen, subjects the woman to the same burdens the man has. (Ascoli [Mignone, p. 300])

In the 1950s, a wave of modernization caused a large number of families to migrate from the south to the north and from rural to urban areas. This mass movement drastically changed the Italian family structure by separating many of the large extended families into smaller, nuclear units. As modernization continued during the prosperous 1960s, more men were employed in factories and the standard of living for the average family increased. Women were predominantly housewives during this time; their role was subordinate in the home and their primary responsibilities were to serve their working husbands, raise the children and maintain the household. (Mignone)

However, not all women were content to be housewives and mothers. The women's movement developed as an outgrowth of the student movement of 1967–1968 and gradually gained popularity until it became a national movement in 1975. (Mignone) The effectiveness and level of participation in the women's movement varied from region to region, and there was even rivalry between groups in cities such as Milan and Verona. (Hellman) This probably was because the Italian women's movement, unlike the one in the United States, was spearheaded by lower and middle class women who formed small groups throughout the country. (Mignone) For example, in the deeply religious northeast, women used their networks in the Church (and occasionally the help of forward thinking priests) to organize discussion groups. (Hellman)

On a political level, women's activist groups such as the Unione delle Donne Italiane (UDI), Movimento della Liberazione delle Donne Italiane (MLD) and Centro Italiano Femminile (CIF) also fought for equality. Despite opposition from many men and the Catholic Church, a great deal of legislation was passed during this time, creating one of the most comprehensive legislative frameworks governing gender issues in the world. Table 1 illustrates a timeline of the most pertinent legislation, which includes the evolution of a world-class parental leave policy.

The Changing Role of the Catholic Church

The legislation passed during the women's movement also marked a change in the relationship between the Church and its followers. Prior to the women's movement one of the central roles of the Church was to instill traditional values in the population and serve as a guide in family planning. This role was challenged in the 1970s with the introduction of family planning laws, and although the infuriated Church and Christian Democrats issued referendums,

Table 1
Summary of Major Legislation Passed during and after the Women's Movement

Date	Legislation
1945	Article 37 of Constitution. The working woman has the same rights and the same remuneration for equal work as a man. Working conditions should permit the fulfillment of her essential family function and ensure to the mother and her child a special adequate protection.
1946	Women's suffrage.
1950	Maternity leave of six weeks before and two months after childbirth.
1970	Divorce legalized.
1971	Maternity Protection Act (Law No. 1204). Compulsory maternity leave extended to two months before and three months after the birth at 80% of the salary. Women may not be dismissed from their positions during the first year after the birth, except in extreme cases.
1975	New Family Act. Men and women are now legally equal partners in marriage.
1977	Equal Treatment of Men and Women Act (Law No. 903). Eliminates gender discrimination in employment practices. Optional six-month maternity leave at 30% of the salary extended to fathers and adoptive mothers.
1978	Abortion legalized.
1985	National Commission on Equality created by the Prime Minister.
1992	European Community's Social Protocol for equality in the workplace.
2000	Parental leave law (Law No. 53). The father or mother may take a total of 10 months' parental leave until the child's ninth birthday.

Sources: Davidson and Cooper, "Equal..."; "Maternity Leave..."; Mignone; "Pregnancy...".

they could not rally enough support to overturn the new laws. Once the center of Italian life, the Catholic Church was visibly losing power among its followers as the traditional Catholic lifestyle began to be replaced with notions of American-style consumerism and individualism. (Mignone)

Today there clearly is a moral dilemma that divides the country, and the majority of Italians are siding with non-traditional Catholic viewpoints. As more women delay marriage and having children in favor of pursuing higher education and serious careers, the population growth is approaching zero. (Mignone) It is estimated that if this trend continues, by the year 2050 the Italian population will decrease by almost 10%. (Roncati) The situation is so alarming that for the first time in history the Vatican approached the Italian government for assistance. In November 2002, Pope John Paul II delivered a speech to the Italian Parliament not only urging women to have more children but also encouraging politicians to establish policies to relieve the economic and social burdens of raising a family. (Associated Press) The Pope acknowledged that women who are trying to balance full-time careers with housework and childcare feel most of the burden. It has become so widespread an issue that sociologists refer to it as *la doppia presenza*, or the double presence. (Blim)

The Double Presence

Following a prosperous two decades of modernization, the economy stagnated in the early 1970s because of the worldwide oil crisis. This economic pressure, coupled with the influ-

ence of the women's movement, brought women into the workforce in large numbers. Many women sought employment to help support their families, while others pursued careers for personal reasons such as self-fulfillment and the desire to be economically independent. However, "[a]s Italian women have taken on men's work in the marketplace, they have retained most of the responsibility for domestic reproduction." (Blim, p. 262) This places significant pressure on them, leading to what has been observed in other industrialized countries as role overload and role conflict, the result of insufficient time and energy to meet the conflicting demands of work and family responsibilities. (Stebbins)

These phenomena are illustrated by comparing the time men and women typically spend on domestic labor in Italy. On average, married women spend ten hours per day on housework alone, whereas men put in just less than two and a half hours daily. When a couple has children the woman's household labor increases an additional hour per child per day, whereas the man's rate remains constant. At the same time, men and women spend approximately equal hours in the workplace each day: seven and a half for men and seven for women. Moreover, the number of women who work outside the home after marriage doubles, providing further evidence of la doppia presenza of work and household responsibilities. (Palomba)

Impact of the Northeastern Italian Culture on Women

One significant factor in the lives of Italian women, as previously mentioned, is the traditional Italian culture. Although it is becoming more widely accepted that women work outside the home, they still are expected to perform their household duties at the same caliber. The division of domestic labor has not been readjusted in many dual-income families, partly because many women are unwilling to delegate their domestic duties and partly because many men still associate a certain stigma with housework. (Facco)

However, many women do receive help with housework and childcare from their extended family. As of 1991, in the central and northeastern regions, where women are most likely to be employed outside the home, 20% of the households were "formally extended or multiple in organization," higher than in any other region of Italy. (Blim, p. 262) Matteo Carrisi of Vicenza illustrates the role of the extended family in northeastern Italian culture. He recalls growing up with a mother who owned a hairdressing shop in the mid 1970s and served as the primary breadwinner for his family while his father was still in school:

> My brother and I were at school [in] the morning, and [in] the afternoon we stayed with our grandmother who lived next door. This [situation] happens a lot with grandparents when the parents are working. [The grandparents] are the mothers! [My mother] took care of everything else (the house, the cooking) and was always tremendously overburdened, but she was always tremendously organized and we never found ourselves alone, at least when we were young.

The 80% of women not living with extended family are in a more difficult situation because there is a general lack of adequate public childcare, especially for children under three. In some cases these women receive childcare aid from other community members, but often the modern demands on women's time and the increased need for childcare and household help are greater than what the traditional support methods can supply.

Another important influence on the role of women in the workforce is the northeast's economic structure, a system that clusters small family businesses into industrial districts. (Rullani) Because the businesses are small, women are often integral to their functioning and have limited access to flexible working arrangements that accommodate childcare. Also, despite the legislation, smaller businesses generally do not enforce equal opportunity hiring to the extent required for larger companies.

Women in Today's Italian Workforce

Preparation through Higher Education

More Italian women than in previous generations are pursuing higher education at universities to gain a competitive edge in the job market. Although over 50% of Italian college graduates in the late 1990s were women, their interests were primarily in the "softer" fields of teaching, art, literature, natural sciences, math and philosophy, and they were underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated fields such as law, politics and engineering. (Mignone) Despite these imbalances, it remains true that "education was a key factor in changing the role of women in society." (Mignone, p. 315) Indeed, without higher education women would not have experienced such a significant advancement into the workforce.

Work Force Statistics

Italian women, many of whom have university degrees, continue to enter the workforce at an increasing rate. The percentage of women in the labor force compared with all Italian women, or the activity rate, has increased from 21.3% in 1972 (Mignone) to 35.8% in 2000 (Abbade and Sabbadini). From 1993 to 2000 the total number of people employed grew by 596,000; this growth translates to an addition of 695,000 female workers at the cost of 99,000 male workers (Abbade and Sabbadini) However, when the total labor force was compared by gender, men still overwhelmingly outnumbered women 61.48% to 38.52% in 2000. (Roncati) Italian women's involvement in the workforce remains low compared with other industrialized countries. For instance, the activity rate for American women was 60.2% in 2000, more than 1.5 times the Italian rate. ("Labor Force...") The data indicate that Italy is in a period of cultural transition where the slight majority of women continue to maintain traditional roles while an increasing number are working outside the home. As discussed in the next section, the services sector has been instrumental in women's efforts to advance in the workforce.

Women in the Services Sector

The growth of the services sector in Italy since the 1960s undoubtedly has been one of the most influential factors in women gaining paid jobs. Positions in arenas such as hotels, credit unions and insurance, business services, education, health, transportation and communications (Roncati) attract more women than do industrial positions. In terms of composition of the workforce, in the late 1990s women made up 66% of the education workforce (teachers and university professors), 22% of physicians and over 65% of nurses. (Mignone) In fact, more Italian men and women are employed in the services sector than any other, (Castells) and in 2000, the services sector made the largest contribution to the Italian GDP, at 66.8%. (Roncati)

These data reflect the importance of the services sector not only to working Italian women but also to the entire economy. Blim explains why women favor the service sector over other fields, such as manufacturing or self-employment:

> Because the rhythm of the workday is a little more adjustable than that of the assembly line, women in services often obtain schedules that allow them to continue some of their domestic work routines. The midday "siesta," still observed by many offices, enables women to prepare the main family meal and attend to children who have finished school for the day. Time off to accompany children to school and even to quickly grocery-shop are often tolerated by public and private employers alike. (p. 261)

The Role of the Informal Sector

The flexibility in the services sector is even more extensive in the informal sector. Informal labor has many forms, from simply helping out in family businesses, which is especially common in the northeast, to performing "outwork," where employees are assigned tasks that are completed in their homes. For example, women have performed tasks for textile companies such as sewing, embroidery and other machine-inde-

pendent jobs at home for decades.

Women are especially attracted to this type of labor because they can more easily manage raising their children while still earning income. In the late 1990s it was "estimated that women [made] up 70% of the unofficial market." (Mignone, p. 314) Although one of the major disadvantages associated with informal labor includes unfair compensation compared with workers performing similar tasks in the traditional workplace, many women use it to reduce the burden of la doppia presenza.

Women Entrepreneurs

Increasingly, career-focused Italian women are entrepreneurs, establishing and managing their own companies. In recent years Italian women have become a strong entrepreneurial presence, mostly due to the continued growth of the services sector. Between 1993 and 2000 the number of women entrepreneurs more than doubled from 50,000 to 108,000. (Abbade and Sabbadini) As of 2000 one-quarter of all Italian companies were run by women. (Abbade and Sabbadini)

Female-run companies differ in several interesting ways from male-run companies, although both sexes have taken advantage of the booming services sector. Most women entrepreneurs focus on three major areas: retail sales, services to families and services to companies, while the top male-run areas are services to companies, trade, automobile services and public activities. (Abbade and Sabbadini) Especially noteworthy are the differences in average income and hours worked per week between male- and female-run businesses. When comparing average company income per employee, female-run companies earned only 43% of male-run companies. (Abbade and Sabbadini) One explanation is that women are involved in less profitable areas. Women's businesses also tend to be smaller than men's; many of them have four or fewer employees. Another viable explanation is that domestic responsibilities take away time that many female entrepreneurs would have devoted to the business: 40.6% of women versus 58.5% of men work 46 hours or more per week. (Abbade and Sabbadini) The major difference appears when unpaid domestic labor is added in, again shedding light on la doppia presenza that women face: 53.3% of women versus 26% of men work more than 60 hours per week in total. (Abbade and Sabbadini)

As discussed previously, the women's movement in Italy has led to greater freedom, allowing women to pursue higher education and full-time careers. But all women, regardless of place of employment, must confront the same issues of balancing work and family life. As the next section illustrates, many women are having few or no children as a way to alleviate some of the pressure of la doppia presenza, but this leads to larger issues such as population decline and further changes in the traditional family structure.

Enduring Effects of the Women's Movement

The Low Birthrate

The most obvious results of women entering the workforce in greater numbers are the increasing average age for marriage and the decreasing birthrate. Italy has the lowest birthrate in the EU, falling from an average of 2.41 children per woman in 1960 to 1.25 children per woman in 2000. (Roncati) Women also marry an average of seven years later than their mothers did; the age has increased from 20 to 27 years since the late 1960s. (Davidson and Cooper) This is largely because more women are attending college, which, when coupled with the Italian tradition of living with the parents until marriage or a stable career is established, postpones the normal sequence of life events several years.

The national concern is that in the next 20 years Italy's aging population will decrease drastically because there are too few babies born to compensate for the loss. In 2000, the birthrate was 9.3 per 1000, while the death rate was 9.9 per 1000. (Roncati) These numbers were estimated at 8.93 per 1000 and 10.13 per 1000, respectively, for 2002 (World Factbook), indicating that the population already is on the verge of shrinking.

In addition to the strain of a decreasing population, Italian adults also will become more

burdened in caring for aging parents because fewer siblings are available to share the responsibilities. Traditionally women are more likely than men to care for elderly parents or parents-in-law, placing yet another burden on them, as they attempt to balance a career with caring for the house, children and elderly parents. Such a complicated situation currently affects relatively few families in Italy, but it will become more serious in the next few generations if changes do not occur so that the country can effectively manage this demographic transition.

Changes in the Family Structure

In addition to the demographic change of the Italian population, the traditional family structure also has transformed as a result of the women's movement. As noted previously, during the 1950s families became more isolated and nuclear as a result of moving to urban areas. Legislation legalizing divorce and abortion also contributed to a change in the traditional family form. Like other modernized countries, Italy is experiencing an increase in the number of single-parent households and households without children. In 2001 the main household types were as follows: 45% couples with children, 20% couples without children, 23% single adults and 9% single parents. (Roncati) Despite the changing patterns of family life, Italy remains a traditional country that values family ties and a strong community. This is evident in the fact that "the Italian divorce rate is the lowest in Europe. Even after they were given legal right to divorce, Italians still were hesitant to dissolve their family unit." (Mignone, p. 287)

Changes in the family structure also have carried over from the transformation of the workforce. Across Europe, one of the most predominant changes has been a "decline in the traditional household form, of a single male breadwinner and a growth of 'dual participant' households, or those where both partners are in work." (Franco and Winqvist, p. 1) Italy is no exception: in 70.6% of the dual participant households, both the male and female worked full time (over 30 hours per week), which is among the highest rates in the EU. (Franco and Winqvist) In addition, the majority of Italians work what are called "long full-time" hours (more than 40 hours a week), and this behavior continues even after couples have children: in over 40% of dual participant households where both parents worked full time, there were dependent children. (Franco and Winqvist) These data show that even though women are a minority of the total Italian workforce, they are working long hours outside the home along with their male counterparts.

In contrast, the woman works part time in only 9.0% of the couple households without children and in 13.0% of couple households with children. (Franco and Winqvist) The majority of Italian households, both with children[1] and without, continue the tradition of a single breadwinner. However, when the women do work it is usually full time: following not far behind traditional single income families are the dual-income full-time families without children (34.9%) and those with children (31.2%). This absence of part-time work is largely because most small family businesses do not offer their employees this option.

The trend of young women prioritizing career over family is likely to increase in the coming generations. Alessandra Spanò, a psychologist, recently conducted a survey of middle-school students in Vicenza and found that 80% of the students want a full-time, prestigious job and rank having a family and children in second place. This change in priorities has several possible explanations. First, an increasing number of women receive higher education and the level of education reached by the woman plays an important role in determining the work behavior of the couple. "The number of dual participation households as a proportion of all 'couple' households with at least one partner in work was over 20 percentage points higher for those where women had university or equivalent education than for those where they had not progressed beyond compulsory schooling." (Franco and Winqvist, p. 5)

Second, a major reason women join the workforce is to establish themselves financial-

[1]"With children" is defined by Eurostat as the presence of one or more children under the age of 15. Extended family members were not considered in the analysis even though they may have been present.

ly and exercise their right to work outside the home. Naturally, staying at home raising children interferes with this goal. Many women today handle the pressure by taking a less demanding job or temporarily leaving the workforce until their children are grown.

The current situation poses an enormous burden on families, especially women. The Italian government is increasingly aware of this issue and has instituted policies to create more favorable working environments for women, allowing them to incorporate their maternal responsibilities. In fact the Economic Commission for Europe has designated a Work Session on Gender Statistics specifically to investigate gender issues across Europe, and in 2000 Italy proclaimed that gender issues had become a national priority. (Sabaddini) Although the issue is receiving much international attention, the difficulties lay in implementing changes that employers and employees, both men and women, agree are for the common good.

Policy Recommendations: Taking Advantage of an Existing System

The profound transformation of Italian culture since the advent of the women's movement has resulted in many complex unresolved social issues: two of the most critical are the low birthrate and the lack of available childcare. Both issues have prompted the Italian people to reevaluate their views on work and family as women continue to redefine their roles in society.

Italians would benefit from shifting their frame of reference to addressing the "family issue" as opposed to the "women's issue." As discussed previously, legislation that allows women to take extensive time out for family has existed for many years, but comes as a detriment to their careers. In contrast, men only recently have been allotted a significant amount of time by law for childcare and family leaves, and in many cases their employers still look negatively upon such absences. If women are ever to achieve equality in the workforce, the new parental leave policies must be accepted and enforced so that men also can actively participate in childcare, especially during the critical first three years of the child's life when little public care is available. An even division of the labor not only would decrease the burden of la doppia presenza for women but also would increase respect between the partners and further strengthen the family unit.

Many researchers have also found a positive correlation between the degree to which a husband supports his wife's employment and her level of success. In fact, this emotional support between the partners is crucial as was illustrated in the 1950s and 1960s when many men began working long hours in the factories: the women gave their husbands full emotional support and also maintained the household. Today the culture has changed and women are increasingly likely to be employed full time, so men simply cannot hold the same expectations of their wives (in terms of housework) as they did in the past. Instead the men must recognize this change and modify their own behaviors and attitudes accordingly by supporting their wives' employment decisions and taking greater responsibility for domestic duties.

Despite the inequalities that many women experience in the home, it was reported in the late 1980s that "women perceive the greatest source of discrimination as stemming from male prejudice in the workplace." (Davidson and Cooper, p. 171) The traditional belief that the highest-ranking positions in companies should be reserved for men hinders women's advancement into managerial and decision-making positions. (Carrisi) Moreover, many businesses rely on informal networks that often exclude women from hiring and promotion; instead they should consider objectifying these practices so that all candidates have equal opportunity. Lastly, it is important for businesses to consider other factors that contribute to men's and women's relative success in the workplace, such as the competitiveness of the business culture, availability of continued training and opportunities to receive mentoring. (Davidson and Cooper)

The process of changing Italian attitudes toward women and familial responsibilities in both the home and business will take considerable time. As seen with the equal opportunity legislation passed in the 1970s, a certain level of commitment and enforcement is required to

facilitate the necessary changes. The same principle applies to this cultural transition: individuals are more likely to follow the lead of authority figures in areas such as politics, business, art and religion than they are to adopt the changes on their own simply because it is the "right thing to do." It is not sufficient to create policies if the suggested behaviors are not reflected in the Italian leaders' actions themselves; thus the suggested changes must be supported in all areas of the Italian culture before any tangible results occur.

Although the attitudes and beliefs of the population are certainly a major component in the solution to the low birthrate crisis, other more concrete revisions in the childcare system, business practices and the Church also may provide a remedy. It is critical, however, that the reforms implemented are unique to the Italian situation and that care is taken to preserve the defining characteristics of the culture, including the importance of strong family bonds, personal contact and trust.

In fact, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi already has taken a major step in reforming the childcare system. In November 2001 the Cabinet "approved a Bill aimed at fixing standards to encourage education and socialisation for children between the ages of six months and three years in nurseries." ("Focus...") This legislation aims to fill a serious gap in the Italian childcare system, specifically, public care available for children under three (an attempt to match the care provided for older children: "more than four-fifths of children aged three to five get at least some daytime care at the state's expense." ["How the Other...", p. 3]) The reform called for 300 million euros to "completely reorganise services for babies and infants over the three year period 2002–2004." ("Focus...")

Furthermore, in October 2002 Berlusconi and Equal Opportunities Minister Stefania Prestigacomo introduced the first crèche, a facility capable of caring for up to ten children (ages zero to three years). (AGI) Italians traditionally have not favored public daycare because of its impersonal nature, but "[t]he Prime Minister believes that mini-kinder gardens are important and are the answer to many workers' problems, namely the long distance away from their children." (AGI) This new alternative builds on the strength of the existing preschool system and could be, in the words of Berlusconi, an "inexpensive solution with negligible costs." (AGI)

To approach the problem from within businesses, the highly specialized industrial districts of the northeast could be modified to further take advantage of their strength in personal relationships and trust, characteristics that every parent seeks in a care provider. Women entrepreneurs could take special advantage of the demand for childcare by providing those necessary services to employees in that district, creating a model of an "extended family." This method of childcare would be feasible and culturally acceptable because the majority of Italians feel that issues pertaining to balancing work and family life are not to be handled by the government, rather by companies. (Facco) This modification also is a prelude to more strictly enforced parental leave legislation and continues the process of altering the stigma that many companies attach to paternal leave.

Moving beyond the public sector, the churches in the northeast also could more fully utilize their facilities by opening small childcare centers. As an integral part of the community, churches are a natural place to provide care and it is a logical extension of the Pope's request to increase the birthrate, especially in smaller towns where religion plays a larger role in peoples' lives than elsewhere in the country. For example, two of the large Catholic churches in Vicenza, Carmine and Filipini, have extensive facilities that remain mostly unused, with the exception of several hours of catechism per week. These facilities could be transformed into remarkable day care facilities, and because many people live near their churches, this option would keep the children close to home. Older adults and the large immigrant population with experience caring for children and seeking work are likely candidates to provide the care. Many women in the northeast also are dedicated to various volunteer organizations, and perhaps those organizations whose focus is providing nurturing, safe and free childcare in conjunction with churches will be established in years to come.

Again, it is important to acknowledge that

women have made tremendous headway in the past three decades and that continued progress toward equality now rests in the ability to involve both parents equally in domestic responsibilities along with social and economic support from their employers. When young people feel confident that they can adequately manage a career, household and children, the birthrate once again will begin to increase.

Conclusion

The women's movement of the 1970s in Italy sparked a major transformation of the culture, especially in the urban northeast. "By entering the male working world, women gained freedom of movement in society; but they also brought to their lives a burden: the splitting of their roles and identity." (Mignone, p. 317) As a result many women are choosing the role of breadwinner over that of mother and housewife. In doing so, women have made a significant contribution to the workforce, especially in the services sector. However, we have also seen the negative consequences their society faces including the dangerously low birthrate.

Although this situation affects many industrialized countries, Italy has several key advantages that can help it remedy the crisis. First, Italy already has some of the most progressive and extensive gender-issues legislation in the world. Second, the strong community network and presence of extended family provide a readily available source of trusted childcare. Churches also can be included in this category, if programs are developed to effectively use these existing resources. The challenges arise in changing the beliefs and attitudes of the population, evident in the behavior of many younger Italians (especially in the northeast) who have been raised with a more "egalitarian experience" (Mignone, p. 318) than older generations. Italy already has established a strong framework that can be continually improved upon, and in time viable long-term solutions will be implemented to stabilize the crisis of la doppia presenza.

REFERENCES

AGI. "Berlusconi: Kinder Gardens." October 9, 2002. Online. http://www.agenziaitalia.it. Accessed October 10, 2002.

Abbade, Corrado and Linda Laura Sabbadini. "How the Work of Women Has Changed — Female Entrepreneurs." Working paper submitted by ISTAT. *Statistical Commission and Economic Commission for Europe.* Conference of European Statisticians. ECE Work Session on Gender Statistics. Geneva, Switzerland, September 23–25, 2002.

Ascoli, Giulietta. L'UDI tra emancipazione e liberazione (1943–1964). *Problemi del Socialismo*, Oct.–Dec. 1976. Cited by: Mignone, Mario B. *Italy Today: At the Crossroads of the New Millennium*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998.

Associated Press. "Pope to Italians: Have more babies." November 14, 2002. Online. http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/11/14/pope.speech/. Accessed November 14, 2002.

Blim, Michael. "Italian Women after Development: Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Domestic Work in the Third Italy." *The History of the Family*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2001, pp. 257–70.

Carrisi, Matteo. Personal electronic mail to the author, December 12, 2002.

Castells, M. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. Cited by: Blim, Michael. "Italian Women after Development: Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Domestic Work in the Third Italy." *The History of the Family*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2001, pp. 257–70.

Davidson, Marilyn J. and Cary L. Cooper, eds. *European Women in Business and Management*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1993.

"Equal Treatment for Men and Women." European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Online. http://www.eurofound.eu.int/emire/ ITALY/EQUALTREATMENTFORMENANDWOMEN-IT.html. Accessed March 19, 2003.

Facco, Manuela. Remarks to Martindale Center Student Associates, May 21, 2002, Vicenza, Italy.

"Focus on the Cabinet Meeting of 8/11/2001." Online. http://www.asca.it/focus/governo/01/11/13/focus-governo2.shtml. Accessed March 15, 2003.

Franco, Ana and Karin Winqvist. "Women and Men Reconciling Work and Family Life." *Statistics in Focus*. Theme 3. Population and Social Conditions. Eurostat. September 2002.

Goddard, Victoria A. *Gender, Family and Work in Naples*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Berg, 1996.

Hellman, Judith Alder. *Journeys Among Women: Feminism in Five Italian Cities*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

"How the Other Half Works." Online. http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/printdoc. Accessed July 18, 2002.

"Labor Force, Employment, and Earnings." Online. http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/01statab/labor.pdf. Accessed June 14, 2003.

"Maternity Leave (Compulsory and Optional)." European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Online. http://www.eurofound.eu.int/emire/ITALY/MATERNITYLEAVECOMPULSORYANDOPTIONAL-IT.html. Accessed March 19, 2003.

Mignone, Mario B. *Italy Today: At the Crossroads of the New Millennium*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998.

Palomba, R. I Tempi in Famiglia, in *Lo Stato delle Famiglie in Italia*. M. Barbageli and C. Saraceno, eds. Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, 1997, pp. 163–72. Cited by: Blim, Michael. "Italian Women after Development: Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Domestic Work in the Third Italy." *The History of the Family*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2001, pp. 257–70.

"Pregnancy and Maternity." European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Online. http://www.eurofound.eu.int/emire/ ITALY/PREGNANCYANDMATERNITY-IT.html. Accessed March 19, 2003.

Roncati, Roberta, ed. "Italy in Figures." Italian National Statistical Institute. Online. www.istat.it. Accessed December 15, 2002.

Rullani, Enzo. Remarks to Martindale Center Student Associates, May 20, 2002, Vicenza, Italy.

Sabaddini, Linda Laura. "Making Gender Mainstreaming a National Priority." Working Paper No. 14. Work Session on Gender Statistics. Conference of European Statisticians. *Statistical Commission and Economic Commission for Europe*, Orvieto, Italy, October 2000.

Spanò, Allesandra. Personal electronic mail to the author, December 12, 2002.

Stebbins, Leslie F. *Work and Family in America*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2001.

Willson, Perry R. *The Clockwork Factory: Women and Work in Fascist Italy*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1993. World Factbook. Online. http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/it.html. Accessed November 6, 2002.